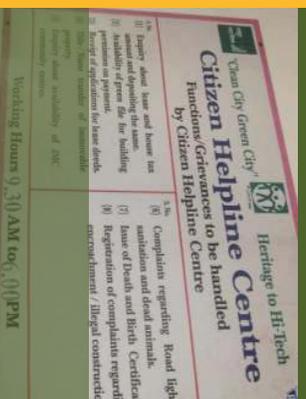


Enabling Public Grievance Redressal Systems in Municipalities

AN OPERATIONAL MANUAL



PRIA, India
SILAKA, Cambodia
PRIP Trust, Bangladesh



With support from



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Preface

Asia is urbanising at a pace faster than ever. The ever increasing population in the Asian cities and the consequent increase in demands for supply of basic services like housing, water, sanitation, health, education etc. pose enormous challenges to the urban local governance institutions. The existing capacities and resources of most urban local governance institutions are over stretched. The situation is exacerbated due to lack of governance reforms leading to enormous deficits in the transparency, accountability and citizen participation – the hallmarks of any democratic governance institutions.

The engagement of civil society organisations (CSOs) is pivotal in making the urban local governance institutions transparent, accountable, responsive and participatory. However, the capacities of CSOs to engage and hold the urban local governance institutions are also limited.

The project “Deepening Local Democratic Governance through Social Accountability in Asia” aimed to improve democratic practices in urban local governance institutions through social accountability for improving the provision of basic services to the most marginalised families in two Asian cities - Rajshahi in Bangladesh and Takhmao in Cambodia. The project was supported by the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF) and was implemented by the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) in partnership with PRIP Trust, Bangladesh and SILAKA, Cambodia. It addressed the deficits of democratic practices, particularly the lack of citizen participation, transparency and accountability mechanisms in municipalities, due to which these institutions often fail to deliver services effectively and equitably and lack responsiveness towards the most marginalised. It made efforts to enhance organised citizen action and participation through mobilisation, capacity building, campaigns and participatory monitoring (using citizen report card and citizen monitoring methods) to ensure accountability. Its endeavours included enhancing citizens’ access to information and basic services by developing partnership with the elected municipalities to establish ‘models’ of social accountability mechanisms, particularly using citizen charters, pro-active information disclosures and public grievance redressal mechanisms. Having harvested the lessons from these interventions at the municipality level coupled with specific policy analysis at the sub-national and national levels, policy dialogues and policy oriented capacity building learning events were organised towards policy changes. It contributed to enhance capacities of local intermediary CSOs through training, exposure visits, on-site coaching and mentoring for implementing various social accountability approaches and tools and also influencing national and sub-national policies on urban governance issues.

One of the critical outcomes of the intervention was to systematise the experience of implementing specific social accountability approaches, tools and methods so that the practitioners from CSOs as well as municipal officials could scale up, mainstream and institutionalise these practices elsewhere. Three operational manuals produced through this initiative are significant step towards these purposes. We sincerely hope that the practitioners from CSOs and officials from the municipalities will find these manuals handy and useful.

Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay
Director, PRIA
March 2013

Acknowledgements

This manual is produced based on the experiences and lessons learnt from the “Deepening Local Democratic Governance through Social Accountability in Asia” project, implemented by the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (India) in partnership with PRIP Trust (Bangladesh) and SILAKA (Cambodia) with the support from the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF). The project was implemented between February 2011 and March 2013.

One of the components of the project was to synthesise experiences, learnings and knowledge gained through various interventions across Bangladesh and Cambodia in the form of manuals, papers and policy briefs. In pursuance of the same, this manual on “Enabling Public Grievance Redressal Systems in Municipalities” is a part of a series of three manuals designed for practitioners, organisations and institutions who are working towards strengthening municipal governance and citizen engagement. The other two manuals are on “Citizen Report Card: Citizen Feedback for Effective Service Delivery” and “Implementing Citizen Charters and Pro-Active Information Disclosures in Municipalities”.

PRIA, PRIP Trust and SILAKA would like to acknowledge the contribution and valuable support of the following individuals and organisations in the implementation of the project and preparation of this manual:

- The citizens of the cities of Rajshahi (Bangladesh) and Takhmao (Cambodia) for their participation and cooperation in the various project interventions
- Municipal authorities of Rajshahi City Corporation (Bangladesh) and Takhmao Municipality (Cambodia)
- Elected representatives/councillors of the respective wards in both the cities where the project was implemented
- Local Civil Society Organisation who implemented the ground activities

In addition to the above, we are grateful to Dr. Aradhana Srivastava for her time and efforts in shaping this manual and putting the experiences and lessons together (from the above mentioned project and other similar interventions) in a systematic manner.

Bhavita Vaishnava
Senior Programme Officer, PRIA
March 2013

Table of Contents

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION	1-5
1.1 Public grievance redressal as a mechanism for responsive governance	1
1.2 Rationale and significance	1
1.3 Types of PGR systems	2
1.4 Objective of the manual, structure and utility	5
SECTION 2: IMPLEMENTING THE PGR SYSTEM	6-13
2.1 Enabling a public grievance redressal system	6
2.2 Preparatory assessments and defining strategies	6
2.3 Citizen engagement and demand generation	7
2.4 Engagement of the concerned authority	8
2.5 Institutionalising the PGR system	11
SECTION 3: UTILISING THE PGR SYSTEM	14-17
3.1 Use of PGR system for grievance redressal	14
3.2 Challenges and lessons learnt	15
REFERENCES	18
ANNEXES	
Annex 1: Methodology Flowchart – SUISAM Project	19
Annex 2: Best Practices	20

Acronyms

CCRS	Central Complaint Registration System
CFC	Complaint Facilitation Centre
CPGRAMS	Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System
C-TAG	City Level Technical Advisory Group
DARPG	Directorate of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances
DMC	Deputy Municipal Commissioner
GOI	Government of India
IMCC	Integrated Mobile Complaints Counter
JNNURM	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
MCC	Mobile Complaints Counter
MCGM	Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai
MIS	Management Information System
NIC	National Informatics Centre
OGRTS	Online Grievance Redressal Tracking System
PCB	Public Complaints Bureau
PG	Public Grievance
PGR	Public Grievance Redressal
PRIA	Society for Participatory Research in Asia
RTI	Right to Information
SAM	Social Accountability Mechanism
SMS	Short Messaging Service
SUISAM	Supporting ULBs in Institutionalising Social Accountability Mechanisms
TERI	The Energy and Resources Institute
ULB	Urban Local Body
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
VMC	Varanasi Municipal Corporation

Section 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Public grievance redressal as a mechanism for responsive governance

In a democratic setup, public services are provided by the governance institutions for the fulfilment of citizen's needs that are expected to be to their satisfaction. Any dissatisfaction in the product or process of service provision could cause a grievance, which is an expression of dissatisfaction. It could initially be in the form of a complaint, requiring a response. If a satisfactory response is not forthcoming, the discontent grows into a grievance. Grievance Redressal is a platform provided by the governance institutions to the citizens to voice their dissatisfaction about poor or inadequate performance of the institutions and hold them accountable for the same (PRIA, 2011).

One of the basic indicators of accountable and responsive governance is an efficient and effective public grievance redressal (PGR) system. Any government or organisation with a significant citizen interface must have a grievance redressal mechanism that records the grievances or complaints of the users and takes requisite action within a given time frame to address them. A functional grievance redressal system is a unique gauge to measure service efficiency and helps the government or organisation to deliver quality services in a user-friendly manner by eliminating the causes of grievances. A public grievance redressal system signifies the intent of the government or agency to be more responsive to the needs of the people.

1.2 Rationale and significance

Grievance handling is a very important and sensitive area of the government's work profile. Yet it is an area largely taken for granted and, at worst, neglected by the service providers, as it does not fall into the category of "urgent" matters.

Activating a credible and responsive grievance redressal system requires sensitisation of service providers on the one hand and also of 'citizens' on the other, as it is necessary to create a climate of civic and social responsibility among 'citizens', not merely 'consumers' or 'customers'. Without a good

Grievance redressal is integral to accountability, as can be seen from the following definition:

Accountability describes the rights and responsibilities that exist between people and the institutions that affect their lives, including governments, civil society and market actors. In general, relationships of accountability have two important components:

- Answerability (the right to get a response and the obligation to provide one)
- Enforceability (the capacity to ensure an action is taken, and access to mechanisms for redress when accountability fails)

complaint redressal system, Citizen's Charters¹ have no effect. Departments should establish highly credible and responsive complaints procedures and redressal systems.

The redressal mechanism could be used to provide feedback periodically for the management of systemic reform. Governments could consider setting up independent watchdog committees at the district/block/village levels by involving civil society organisations (CSOs), which are acknowledged to be closer to the populace. These committees could monitor the functioning of the local grievance redressal systems, as well as cases of negligence and delay with issues calling for systemic reform, and report to

The *Sevottam* Framework

The Government of India, in order to bring systemic improvements in public service delivery, created a new framework in 2005 called 'Sevottam' to bring excellence in public service delivery. The *Sevottam* framework has three basic modules: (1) citizen charter; (2) public grievance redress, and (3) public service delivery capability.

Source: Government of India 2010.

higher levels of government for corrective action, if required (CUTS International).

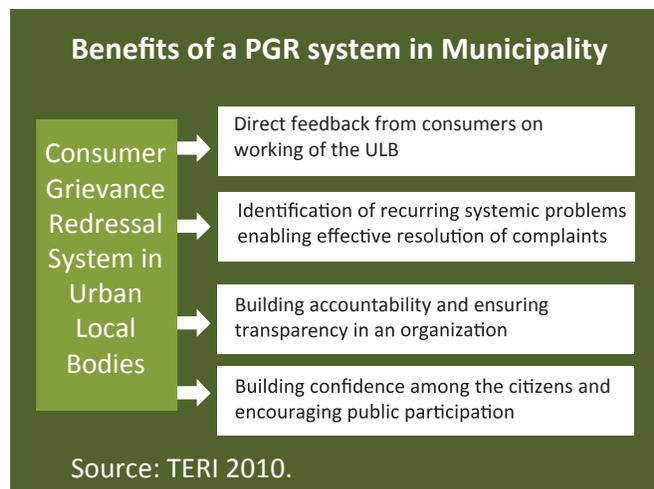
In India, grievance redressal is one of the priority areas of reform under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission² (JnNURM). In urban governance, grievance redressal mechanisms provide a platform to citizens to lodge their complaints related to various services being provided by the municipality, and provide their feedback. PGR mechanisms bridge the communication gap between the municipality and citizens and also serve as a means to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the functioning of municipalities themselves (TERI, 2010).

1.3 Types of PGR systems

The PGR system typically comprises a mode for lodging complaints, such as a helpdesk, toll-free number or any other citizen interface. There is a system for recording the information, onward transmission and management of complaints and finally redress of complaint.

1.3.1 Modes of lodging complaints

Complaints could be lodged in several ways. They could be written (as in an application or structured form) or oral (through a helpdesk or single window system) and transmitted through telephone, SMS, the internet (emails or online)



¹The Citizen's Charter is a written, voluntary declaration by Service Provider that highlights the standards of service delivery that they must subscribe to, availability of choice for consumers, avenues for grievance redressal and other related information.

²Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM) is a city-modernisation programme launched by the Government of India in the Year 2005. It aims at creating 'economically productive, efficient, equitable and responsive cities' by a strategy of upgrading the social and economic infrastructure in cities, provision of Basic Service to Urban Poor (BSUP) and wide-ranging urban sector reforms to strengthen municipal governance in accordance with the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992.

or other informal routes such as complaints to local elected representatives, senior functionaries or community leaders.

1.3.2 Information to be recorded

The level of information required to be recorded in a complaint also varies with the governance institution. Generally the essential aspects include the name and contact details of the complainant, date of receipt, details of the complaint, nature of redress required by her/him and immediate action to be taken on the complaint. For example, if the desired redressal of a complaint is beyond the capability of municipality and requires the engagement and involvement of other line departments or senior decision-making authorities, then information needs to be recorded accordingly and further transferred to the respective officials for their appropriate action and follow-up.

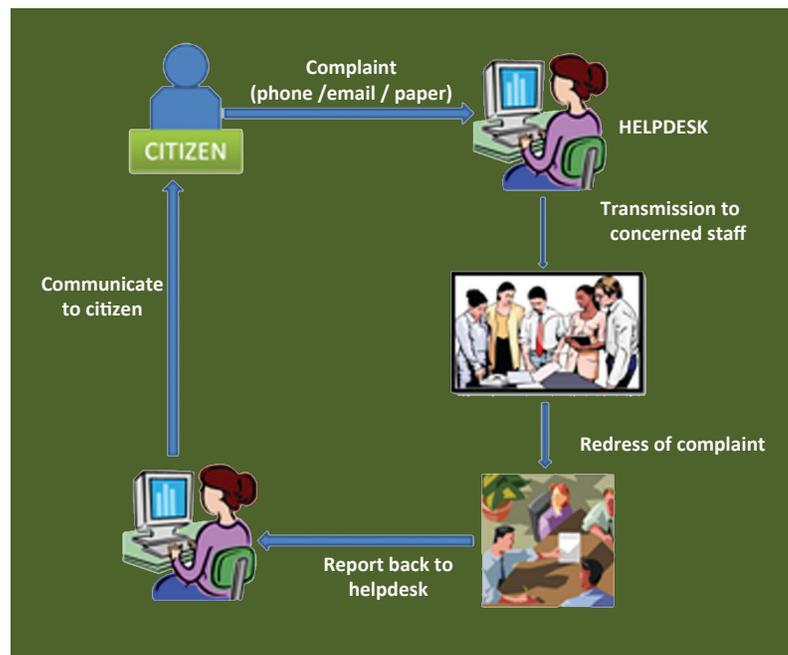
1.3.3 Effective complaint management

Satisfactory grievance redressal is achieved only when the complaint is duly acknowledged and timely addressed to the complainant's satisfaction. Effective grievance management requires a system to:

- Acknowledge complaints by providing a reference number or code
- Designate a location to receive complaints from different mediums/routes
- Develop a system for record keeping (register or electronic filing)
- Process and record complaints (forwarded to different departments)
- Investigate and analyse the complaints
- Keep the complainant informed of the progress
- Periodically analyse the complaints and improve the process by informing the departments about their performance

The time targets for responding to the complaints should be stated for:

- Acknowledging complaints
- Responding to complaints
- Keeping people informed if the response target cannot be met and explaining the reasons for the same
- The possible outcome - the information should state what redress people can expect when they have a complaint



Feedback from the citizens could be sought after registering the complaint and also after the complaint has been redressed. This would help streamline the system and improve its efficiency. Feedback could be sought over the counter at service outlets, or through the emails, phone calls, by post, through consumer organisations or by constituting consultative committees.

1.3.4 Redress options

Complainants could seek redress in several ways – sometimes redress could be in the form of an apology or an explanation. Sometimes it may require an assurance mentioning the stipulated time by which action would be taken, backed by action and some monitoring. Sometimes redress would require corrective action to set things right. Often it may also require financial compensation. The nature of redress is contingent upon the nature of the complaint.

1.3.5 Requirements for an efficient PGR system

An efficient and effective PGR system has several prerequisites:

- It should be accessible, well-publicised, simple, quick, fair, responsive and effective. The very purpose of the system is defeated when users face harassment, waste of time and money, repeated visits to offices, and institutionalised systems of informal payments in lieu of services (CUTS International).
- The language, content and instructions of various complaint forms should be simple and clear. The forms should be widely available to the public. In addition, the applications or petitions submitted should be acknowledged through acknowledgement slips (*ibid*).
- Justice delayed is justice denied; therefore it is crucial for grievances to be addressed within a reasonable time frame. There should be fixed time limits for acceptance or rejection of applications on the basis of well-publicised clearly specified and uniformly applied criteria. Time frames for completing each stage of grievance redressal must also be clearly prescribed and widely publicised (*ibid*).
- Complainants should be kept informed about the progress of their grievance redressal at stipulated time intervals.
- The investigation of the complaint should be fair, impartial and comprehensive. Care should also be taken to maintain the confidentiality of the complainant and the staff against whom the complaint is made (PRIA, 2011).
- The system should be able to categorise and set out the volume of complaints, broken down by different categories. Complaints redressed should also be analysed for response time and the complainant should be informed of the proposed action on her/his complaint.
- The redressal should inform the top management with the ultimate goal of improving service delivery.
- Service providers must have a positive attitude towards grievance redressal, viewing it as an opportunity to improve their services rather than feel offended. In reality, however, officials often bear a hostile attitude towards complainants. They

Some good practices for effective complaint management

- Information on complaints (number, response time, action taken) must be published by departments at least on a yearly basis.
- Data on complaints can be stored electronically for quick access, convenient tracking and better analysis.
- Departments should make the complaint registering process easy for the public and also offer opportunity to complainants to have their complaint reviewed if they are not satisfied with the response.
- Staff must have the right attitude to sympathetically receive complaints, offer adequate courtesy, apologise for mistakes, promise quick action, take prompt corrective steps and check customer satisfaction.

Source: PRIA, 2011

may also be reluctant to pinpoint responsibility for action against grievances of the people. There is a need to bring about a total change in such attitudes of public servants towards redressal of public grievances at all levels (CUTS International).

Often people are not even aware of the existence of grievance redressal systems in many of the government departments. There is a need therefore for wide publicity to create awareness regarding the existing redressal mechanisms among the people, especially the marginalised or vulnerable groups, such as the poor, slum dwellers, women or differently-abled (*ibid*).

1.4 Objective of the manual, structure and utility

This manual is designed to guide practitioners seeking to strengthen PGR systems in municipalities to enable greater transparency and accountability in governance of public services. It has been prepared under the UNDEF funded project “Deepening Local Democratic Governance through Social Accountability in Asia” (DLDGSA) implemented by the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), India in partnership with PRIP Trust, Bangladesh and SILAKA, Cambodia. The overall aim of the project was to improve democratic practices in urban local governance institutions through social accountability for improving the provision of basic services to the most marginalised families in two Asian cities - Rajshahi in Bangladesh and Takhmao in Cambodia. One of the objectives of the project was to utilise the experiences of municipal level interventions for activating responsive governance mechanisms to guide implementation of similar initiatives in other cities of the developing countries. This manual fulfils a similar purpose.

The manual is divided into three sections – the *first* section describes the concept of PGR system as a significant means of strengthening accountability in public service provision. It also highlights the key features of a PGR system and the prerequisites of efficient and effective PGR systems.

The *second* section discusses in detail the steps involved in designing and implementing an initiative to strengthen PGR mechanisms. These include engaging with citizens to generate demand and with authorities for orienting them on social accountability mechanisms and providing them technical support in setting up PGR mechanisms. It also discusses the steps required for institutionalising the PGR system and continuous capacity building and support requirements.

The *third* and final section highlights the application of the PGR system in effectively registering citizen grievances and getting them redressed. It also summarises the overall challenges and lessons learnt in the process of intervening to strengthen PGR systems. To aid the implementers, the text is suitably accompanied with practical tips, illustrations and examples of field implementation experiences from other developing country contexts.

Section 2

IMPLEMENTING THE PGR SYSTEM

2.1 Enabling a public grievance redressal system

Any civil society initiative to activate PGR system in municipalities would need extensive and deeper involvement of the municipalities as they have to activate and in some contexts set up new mechanisms to enhance their accountability towards citizens. The participation of citizen is also required to be enhanced at all levels by constituting local area committees and other citizen groups committed to improving accountability of the local governments and improvement of service provision.

PRIA along with its partners has implemented a number of initiatives in urban governance, especially to enhance citizen engagement for improvement of public services in various Indian cities. One of such initiatives in India was the “Supporting Urban Local Bodies in Institutionalising Social Accountability Mechanisms” (SUISAM) project, which was implemented in three cities (Raipur in Chhattisgarh, Ranchi in Jharkhand, and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh). This project was supported by the Water and Sanitation Programme of the World Bank. The project rested on the basic premise that good local governance leads to enhanced service delivery by municipalities, which are otherwise hampered by lack of transparency and accountability in the local governance institutions. The aim was to have effective and efficient grievance redressal mechanisms in municipalities that would be popular, inclusive, and accessible to all citizens. The mechanisms would also be easily adaptable to different scenarios and also be capable of being replicated or scaled up. Learnings and experiences from such initiatives on enhancing effective municipal governance helped PRIA to undertake similar efforts with the support of partners in the countries of Bangladesh and Cambodia through the DLDGSAA project.

A two-pronged approach was adopted towards implementing the PGR interventions: on the one hand promoting and nurturing the demand side of urban governance by amplifying citizen’s voices, and on the other hand supporting the supply side of urban governance by raising awareness and building capacities of municipal officials towards increasing social accountability; finally the citizen-government interface would also need to be focused upon (See Annex. 1: Methodology Flow Chart).

Based on the experiences of the interventions in India as well as in Bangladesh and Cambodia, the process of activating and improving PGR mechanisms in municipalities can be outlined. The process includes the following initial steps:

2.2 Preparatory assessments and defining strategies

2.2.1. Background research on best practices of social accountability mechanisms (SAMs)

Perusal of best practices available from different cities of similar size or contexts is important to inform project implementation and is helpful in designing the implementation strategy. This information is also useful in building capacity of municipalities to set up effective PGR systems. PRIA conducted a secondary

study of SAMs, especially grievance redressal systems for India and other countries to learn from successful and efficient accountability mechanisms adopted by local governments that are popular, inclusive and accessible to citizens. Examples were documented and shared with the concerned municipalities in India, Bangladesh and Cambodia illustrating how even small initiatives could help improve local government accountability. This initiative not only helped the municipal officials and staff to have a better understanding regarding SAMs, but also cleared their doubts and apprehensions towards adopting and institutionalising some of these.

2.2.2 Situation analysis of existing SAMs in the municipalities

This includes (a) objective assessment of existing systems of citizen interface and grievance redressal (by analysing statutory documents, rules, Government Orders, circulars etc.), and (b) detailed analysis based on the discussion with the municipal staff, after their orientation on SAMs. This exercise gives clear picture of the existing level of awareness, accessibility, inclusiveness, citizen friendliness and efficiency of the current accountability systems and also highlights the constraints and the problems faced by the municipalities and the citizens regarding these. In DLDGSAA project, the situation analysis provided context specific information that helped in developing country specific implementation strategies.

2.3 Citizen engagement and demand generation

The implementing team needs to work closely at the ground level to generate awareness among citizens about the significance of PGR systems and mobilise them to demand accountability in public services by establishment or activation of such systems in the municipalities. Activities that need to be carried out for this purpose are:

□ Meetings with small groups of citizens at the locality or cluster level – these could be utilised for:

- orientation of the citizens and their representatives on need, significance and mechanisms of social accountability
- encouraging them to bring out local problems like sanitation and water supply and use existing systems to register complaints to test the mechanisms available at the municipality



Meeting with citizens' group in Cambodia

In India, communities were mobilised and informed about the different mechanisms that were already available within each municipality for redressing grievances, like the single window system facility at Raipur and Ranchi, the *safaichowkis* (sanitation posts) available at Varanasi; the toll free number at Ranchi etc. All these developments were publicised among the community in the form of posters and wall paintings at various neighbourhoods across the municipalities. In Bangladesh and Cambodia, citizens were encouraged to raise their issues and concerns in interface meetings in the presence of elected representatives so that critical issues could be highlighted and addressed. Through regular

meetings and orientation programmes citizens were informed about the existing One Window Service Office (OWSO) in Takhmao municipality (Cambodia) and the complaint box at Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) office. They were also informed about the online complaint registration system of the RCC, which can be accessed through their website, but as most of the citizens could not use the internet, they were keen to know about the complaint box.

2.4 Engagement of the concerned authority

The municipality needs to be engaged in several ways so as to orient them on SAMs and PGR as a mechanism for enhancing accountability towards citizens.

This is important because through efforts on the demand side, the citizens become increasingly aware of their rights and civic responsibilities and gain solidarity. This leads to increased use of complaint mechanisms and the challenges for the municipalities is to change their attitude towards greater accountability and improved delivery of services to address the complaints by the citizens.

2.4.1 Orientation on social accountability mechanisms

- *Capacity building of municipal officials, elected representatives and citizen leaders:* Joint meetings of municipal officials, elected representatives and citizen leaders or specialists could be held to orient them towards the need for improving accountability of the municipalities. The meetings could discuss several current accountability issues and the implementing agency could inform them on existing legal frameworks for accountability through presentations or document sharing.



Training on Social Accountability

In India, joint meetings of municipal officials, elected representatives and members of City Technical Advisory Group³ (C-TAG) created under JNNURM were conducted in select cities on improving the accountability of their respective municipalities. All service related issues were discussed on a single platform. Information regarding various legislations such as Community Participation Law, Right to Information (RTI) Act, Public Disclosure Law and effective grievance redressal systems were shared with the participants. Special efforts were made to include women in these orientations as they are the worst affected by problems related to basic services such as water and sanitation.

³ The JNNURM guidelines mention that at the national level, an advisory group would be constituted for the mission/sub-mission. This group would be headed by a technical advisor drawn from civil society with proven experience in mobilising collective action for reforms in urban governance. The group would enable the mission to create similar voluntary technical corps in each city identified for the mission/sub-mission. It would encourage private sector participation, citizen's involvement in urban governance at grassroots level and transparency in municipal governance.

Similar interventions were also undertaken in Bangladesh and Cambodia. Elected representatives, municipal officials and citizen leaders were trained and capacitated on social accountability, good governance, and citizen participation mechanisms including grievance redressal systems. These trainings were conducted on regular basis and were designed on the needs and requirements of the particular municipality.

- *Exposure visit to municipalities with well performing PGR mechanisms in place:* Exposure visit of municipal officials, elected representatives and citizen leaders of the target municipalities to other municipalities with well performing PGR mechanisms is a unique way of building capacity of stakeholders by exposing them to functioning PGR systems, wherein they can identify best practices that can be replicated, and also gaps that would need to be corrected. Such visits can best convince the officials of the practicability of setting up PGR mechanisms in their own municipalities.

Under the SUISAM project exposure visit of municipal officials, elected representatives and citizen leaders from the three cities (Raipur, Ranchi and Varanasi) to the city of Hyderabad was conducted. Hyderabad is known for its efficient service delivery and state of the art mechanisms, especially Information Communication Technology (ICT) being used for grievance redressal. Participants were able to select some best practices to adopt with a few changes so that they run effectively in their municipalities. The visit resulted in smaller learning curves as people learnt more in limited time by observing others.



Cambodian delegates interacting with the Mayor of Varanasi

Under the DLDGSAA project exposure visits for municipal officials, CSO partners, women and youth citizen leaders from Rajshahi, Bangladesh and Takhmao, Cambodia, were organised to two Indian cities (Jaipur and Varanasi) to observe the recently adopted mechanisms of social accountability like citizens' charters, grievance redressal system and pro-active disclosure. PRIA has had a long association with these municipalities in terms of building their capacities and supporting

them to implement these systems. The 'citizen helpline centre' of Jaipur and 'telephone complaint redressal system' in Varanasi were two grievance redressal mechanisms observed by the delegates along with other systems like citizen charters and pro-active disclosure. This helped the participants gain a holistic understanding of institutionalising these systems so that they can replicate and adopt them in their respective municipalities.

- *Continuous engagement on improving PGR mechanisms:* Meetings, both formal, and informal, need to be regularly held with municipal officials and councillors to discuss new initiatives in improving PGR mechanisms and to make the municipalities more accountable. Informal meetings help hold frank discussions to strategise ways to focus on areas that need improvement. Structured meetings, on the other hand, help highlight the grievance redressal mechanisms and the improvements required in a more focused manner to a wider audience.

In the informal meetings held under the SUISAM project with municipal officials, senior officials started pressurising different section officers to timely submit status reports of grievance redressal. PRIA held state level consultations where the project was implemented. This helped increase focus on the issue among other cities in the state as well. In the DLDGSAA project PRIA supported the local implementing partners in organising meetings of neighbourhood groups, formation of neighbourhood committees and meetings with citizen representatives, both formally and informally, to sensitise them on participatory mechanisms, municipal service provision and to enable them to identify civic issues requiring redressal by the municipal government.

2.4.2 Technical support in setting up PGR mechanisms

Generating awareness and interest among both the demand and supply sides in activating PGR mechanisms for improved social accountability in the municipalities needs to be accompanied with some firm support by the implementing team towards setting up such mechanisms, improving existing systems and enhancing their functionality. The implementation team would need to render regular technical support to the PGR mechanism, for example, improving the recording format, insisting for receipt to be given to the complainant and getting any existing help line numbers activated. This could involve working together with the municipal officials responsible for running the PGR mechanism.

A crucial intervention in the SUISAM project was improving, designing and institutionalising effective grievance redressal mechanisms in the municipalities. Under this process, best practices in grievance handling and resolution were shared with municipal officers to encourage them to bring about some strategic modifications in the existing systems. In all the three cities, the status of the complaint mechanisms in the municipalities was at different stages. While one city had a telephonic system of complaint registration, another city had a web-based one, through the municipality's website. On the basis of the existing situation in the given local contexts, city specific interventions were designed to further improve the municipal systems of complaint registration and grievance redressal.

Similar efforts were made in Bangladesh and Cambodia under the DLDGSAA project. Exposure visits were conducted to help representatives of Rajshahi and Takhmao municipalities observe and learn from functioning grievance redress mechanisms in Indian cities. In Takhmao, Cambodia, the existing PGR system in the municipality was reviewed along with the citizens through the Neighbourhood Committees (NCs) and the process of forming the Social Accountability Facilitation Committee (SAFC) was triggered in the municipality. Efforts were made to orient the members of the SAFC and capacitate them to handle complaints effectively. It is envisaged that this committee will transfer the received complaints to the respective departments and ensure that appropriate action is taken. In Rajshahi, Bangladesh also, the current PGR system was reviewed by PRIIP Trust and NC members. It was realised that though there is a complaint box at the RCC office, it is hardly used by citizens as most of them do not know about it. In addition to this as most citizens do not go the RCC office but prefer visiting the nearby ward offices to lodge complaints, it was felt the complaint boxes should be installed and registers be provided at the ward offices. In consultation with the municipal officials and the mayor of the city, the identified wards were provided with two complaint boxes each and complaint registers.

2.5 Institutionalising the PGR system

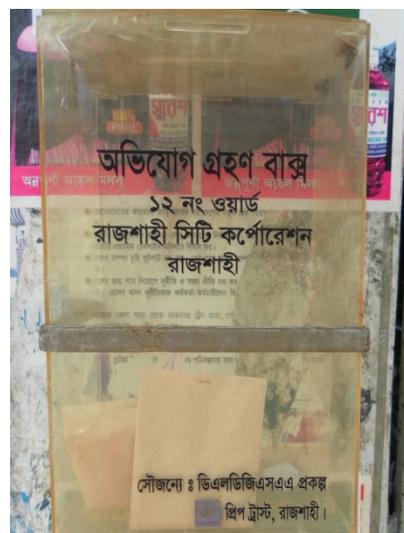
Technical support and hand-holding in implementation of a PGR system at the municipality over a period of time helps ensure institutionalisation of the mechanism within the system. This is essential to enable sustainability of the system even after the end of the project and withdrawal of the implementing team from active assistance within the municipality. Measures that need to be taken by the implementing team to ensure sustainability of the PGR mechanism on the both demand and supply sides are as follows:

On the demand side

- Orientation of citizens on social accountability tools, their importance in democratic governance and need for using them.
- Publicising helpline numbers of the municipal PGR system among the citizens through publishing in newspapers and IEC material, and displaying in posters, boards and wall writings.
- Encouraging the community to use existing systems and test the new improved mechanisms in municipality.

On the supply side

- Meetings and consultations with municipal officials, elected representatives on SAMs and PGR.
- Capacity building programmes and trainings on social accountability tools, specifically PGR system, good governance etc.
- Technical support to set up a physical space for lodging complaints at the zonal offices and municipalities in the form of single window systems, help desks, complaint registration cells etc. with a full time staff member deputed to register complaints.
- Introducing complaint registers and complaint boxes at the ward level (sub-municipal level) where a separate cell cannot be established.
- Other technical support to improve the PGR system, for example, preparing formats for complaint registration and acknowledgement (through receipt and SMS), activating helpline numbers, advocating for periodic review of complaint status at zonal and ULB levels.



Complaint Box installed in Rajshahi, Bangladesh

Enhancing interface among various stakeholders

- Organising interface meetings and multi-stakeholder dialogues among the citizens, municipal officials, elected representatives, private service delivery agencies, media etc. on a regular basis is important so that there is an opportunity to directly share grievances and seek answers from the relevant authorities. These interface-dialogues also help the citizens in understanding the limitations and challenges as faced by the authorities/service providers.



Panel Mayor 1 of Rajshahi City Corporation addressing the participants in an interface meeting

To enable these bodies in institutionalising PGR system, it also becomes important to streamline such mechanisms where gaps between the Citizens and authorities are reduced, through dialogues, in addition to the other technical methods of grievance redressal. These have proved to be extremely beneficial in building the trust between the citizens and authorities.

Outcomes of Institutionalising Grievance Redressal in Municipalities

INDIA

- Raipur Municipal Corporation started the 'single window' system for redressing citizen grievances at the zonal level in 2009, as an instant response to the first phase of status analysis under the project.
- Assistance was provided to the Raipur Municipal Corporation to prepare formats for responding to queries and monthly reporting by zonal offices.
- Complaint tracking is carried out by the corporation with the help of a monthly record of complaints, which is maintained at the zonal level.
- The Raipur Municipal Corporation is in the process of installation of an *Online Grievance Redressal Tracking System (OGRTS)*.
- Ranchi Municipal Corporation has set up a 'Complaint Registration Cell' with a full time staff member for registering complaints.
- Ranchi Municipal Corporation set up a web-based 'Complaint Window' in 2009 to improve its complaint management.
- In May 2010, support was provided to Ranchi Municipal Corporation in developing a standard format for complaint registration. An acknowledgement receipt with complaint number is also given from the registration counter, which was activated in 2010.
- Ranchi Municipal Corporation also activated a complaint helpline in 2010.

- Complaint records are electronically stored and maintained. The software enables anyone to see the details of any grievance by entering the grievance number.
- The Varanasi Municipal Corporation for the first time launched a Central Telephonic Grievance Redressal System in May 2010.
- A complaint cell has been set up in Varanasi to handle citizen grievances. It has a helpline number and is open on all working days from 10 am – 5 pm.
- In Varanasi Municipal Corporation complaint registration is followed by a SMS sent to the concerned official responsible for its redressal and also to the complainant.
- At the sub-zonal level in Varanasi Municipal Corporation there is a sanitation post (Safai Chowki). This is now the first contact point for registering citizen grievances relating to municipal services.

BANGLADESH

- City-wide campaigns held for increasing citizen’s awareness on municipal services and also to sensitise officials for improved civic engagement.
- Existing citizen’s charter was reviewed and information disclosure on garbage management was prepared, detailing service standards and redressal mechanisms.
- RCC expressed their interest to set up complaint boxes including register books for keeping record of complainants. Accordingly additional complaint boxes and registers were provided to ward offices.
- Ward offices maintain complaint registers with particulars of the complainants, nature and place of the problems including mobile numbers. Problems are being solved within a short span of time, mostly within a week, depending on the nature of the problem.
- Local media, from cable television to the folk art ‘Gamvira’, were used to disseminate information on the PGR system in Rajshahi City Corporation.
- Stories of significant complaints being redressed were published in print media on regular basis for wider dissemination to increase demand.
- The Ward Councillors and service providers are increasingly becoming more accountable to the citizens, visiting their constituencies and trying to solve citizen’s problems. On the demand side, citizens have also become proactive and number of complaints registered has increased.

CAMBODIA

- City-wide campaigns held for increasing citizen’s awareness on municipal services and to increase civic engagement.
- The Takhmao Municipality has set up the Social Accountability Facilitation Committee which is in charge of the citizen’s complaint system on water supply and sanitation services.
- Citizen charter on water and sanitation services are prepared, published and propagated by the Takhmao municipality.

Section 3

UTILISING THE PGR SYSTEM

3.1 Use of PGR system for grievance redressal

Some examples of successful utilisation of the PGR mechanism in municipalities to redress citizen grievance have been illustrated in this section to highlight the usefulness of this initiative.

Utilisation of complaint system at Varanasi, India

A woman resident of Saket Nager, Nagwa in Varanasi visited the zonal office and registered a complaint through complaint register regarding dumping of waste at the corner of a road in her neighbourhood. The very next day some municipal sweepers cleaned the place and spread some dry lime powder. This incident proves that the municipal employees feel pressurised once a complaint has been registered in their area of jurisdiction to redress it in a specific time frame.

Installation of water tank in Raipur, India

In a neighbourhood meeting (*Area Sabha*) in Satnami Mohalla in Raipur, residents (especially women) stressed on the water problem in their area and the need for getting the lone public bore-well water connection repaired and a new water tank installed. The project facilitation team informed them about the newly opened single-window grievance redress system in all the eight zones of Raipur city.

Led by the women, residents prepared a resolution note of the *Area Sabha* enlisting all service delivery related issues and highlighting the need to repair the bore-well connection and install a new water tank. With the support from project facilitation team they submitted it to the zonal municipal office. The ward councillor also supported the process. After two days, the Zonal Commissioner accompanied by the Ward Councillor visited Satnami Mohalla, checked the bore-well connection and inspected the water supply situation in the area. People were amazed to see that the municipality promptly addressed their grievance. Not only was the connection soon repaired, a new water tank (1000 litre capacity) with two taps was also installed in Satnami Mohalla within a week's time.

Bangladesh and Cambodia

Efforts to activate PGR mechanisms in two cities in Bangladesh and Cambodia have also begun to bear fruit. The citizens are more aware and confident about municipal services and informed about the duties and responsibilities of ward councillors and municipal officials along with their own rights and responsibilities towards making municipal governance more effective. This has led to increased public participation and engagement. The citizens have easy access to the ward offices and related information. Relations between duty bearers/service providers and the citizens have improved, as they often visit local areas to address community issues. Overall there has been a considerable improvement

in service delivery, such as cleaning streets, garbage dumping etc.

Folk theatre was used successfully in informing the community about the PGR system. As a consequence both the number of registered as well as resolved complaints has increased in both the cities. Public awareness campaigns in Takhmao and Rajshahi raised people's awareness regarding PGR mechanisms. Interface meetings between the different stakeholders built a better understanding on the issues of water and sanitation. These interactions helped service providers to appropriately respond to citizens' queries. For example, in one such meeting, Takhmao City Cleaning Company replied to citizen neighbourhood group's questions and doubts regarding issues related to sanitation in the villages of the two *Sangkats* (local areas) and also discussed the best ways to find solutions. As a result of this, the garbage collection van started going to certain areas (Pattachi village, Sangkat Prek Hou and Kampong Samnanh village, Sangkat Kampong Samnanh) from where garbage was not collected before.

3.2 Challenges and lessons learnt

It is important to understand the various challenges that could be faced while taking up an initiative to strengthen PGR systems in municipalities, especially in developing countries. It is to be kept in mind that practice of social accountability initiatives with public institutions generally face problems related to both institutionalisation and inclusiveness. Owing to the power accumulated by executive agencies and 'closed' bureaucratic culture, citizen engagement and participatory governance is often seen as a threat to executive authority. On the other hand, common citizens frequently do not have enough knowledge or organisation to take advantage of the openings provided to them in a productive manner. Forums of social accountability, such as PGR mechanisms, may also not be uniformly accessible to all. For example, in most Asian cities, urban poor lack property rights, capabilities or connections to access formal systems. Consequently, they depend more on informal grievance redress procedures involving local politicians, street leaders or neighbourhood associations. Service providers may also, on the other hand, face realistic institutional, financial or human resources barriers that hinder their responsiveness (Ranganathan, 2008).

Population diversities and institutional resource constraints therefore pose serious challenges which civil society organisations must bear in mind while implementing initiatives to strengthen PGR systems. These and other such challenges and lessons learnt by PRIA and its partners while implementing initiatives for enabling PGR mechanisms in municipalities in India, Bangladesh and Cambodia are summarised in this section.

3.2.1 Challenges faced in the institutionalisation of grievance redressal mechanisms

- One of the major challenges in the institutionalisation of PGR system is the lack of awareness and knowledge among the municipal officials and other concerned agencies regarding the grievance redressal system and the varied ways through which it can be implemented.
- Municipalities in developing countries often lack the resources and infrastructure (such as computerisation, staff etc.) to facilitate the effective institutionalisation and implementation of the PGR system. Even if municipalities have PGR systems they suffer from implementation gaps. For example, the lack of tracking system for complaints, the lack of follow-up and responding to the complainant etc. This makes it difficult to assess the performance of municipalities in grievance redressals.

- There could be managerial hurdles in municipalities as well, such as frequent shuffling and transfer of the officials and staff, which could affect project progress and outcomes. For example, cooperation of senior officials could help expedite measures to strengthen PGR mechanisms by the municipality. There could also be other resource persons who help provide necessary information and access to higher-level officials. It was observed, especially in India that untimely transfers of senior officials posed major constraints in achieving project goals on time as the team had to start again from scratch and orient the incumbent officials. In Cambodia, it was felt that a prior approval from the ministries and concerned officials at the national level accelerated the procedures at the local level.
- Engaging with local elected representatives is important to the success of any such initiative. While their participation could greatly enhance the outcome, it is challenging to attain as they may initially feel insecure or threatened on account of the growing citizen engagement and therefore may also discourage use of such mechanisms. It was realised that ward councillors in the beginning of the projects often did not participate in neighbourhood group meetings or interface meetings, in spite of prior information. It was only after a lot of persuasion and once they saw some positive changes that they started to participate in these meetings.

3.2.2 Lessons learnt

- PGR system is generally perceived as a mechanism that is highly technical and expensive, for which municipalities mostly do not have the resources (both human and financial). However, in PRIA's experience it was found that setting up an effective grievance redressal system needs the will to do so more than any other external factors. There are different ways through which PGR system can be adopted by a municipality, they range from a simple filing/lodging of complaints manually or electronically in registers and computers to others like online complaints and telephonic complaints. A municipality can adopt a system that best suits its budget and capacities. In most cases, it was observed that municipalities do have some basic provisions for lodging complaints like complaint boxes, registers, phone-lines etc., they just need to be revamped and re-visited to address citizens' complaints effectively.
- Attempting to reform all PGR related processes together at the same time could encounter massive resistance, as we may then be expecting too much from the municipalities. Instead it is advisable to break down the overall task into smaller components and tackle them one at a time.
- Understanding the local context is critical to designing a successful PGR system. Care must be taken to ensure that systems are accessible to all the sections of society including the marginalised sections.
- Increasing citizen awareness and appreciation of the services would put the onus on the departments and officials also to sustain the service levels and make efforts to improve them.
- Efforts involved in creating agents of change at the community level, such as area sabhas, neighbourhood committees, citizen leaders etc. can turn out to be quite fruitful. It was observed that this not only helps in increasing the citizen-municipality interaction and interface in project sites, but also contributes to various activities, events and meetings with the citizens, which ultimately helps in reducing the gap between the two.

- Positive results of any system encourage the citizens to use it more often and participate in building a positive environment in favour of the system as could be observed in the intervening municipalities.
- Team spirit, clear set priorities, coordination and effective knowledge sharing among the various stakeholders is essential to achieve desired results. Effective functioning of a PGR system requires that all stakeholders are engaged in the process and participate actively. Unless citizens are aware of the existing system and know where and how to complain, they would not approach the municipal authorities and express their grievances. Similarly, the authorities, once they receive a complaint, need to work swiftly on the same.
- Awareness generation, knowledge sharing and disseminating crucial information regarding the PGR system are essential steps to ensure that concerned stakeholders know of the existing system. This could comprise sharing best practices, case studies based on practical experiences, conducting exposure visits, and having regular structured and non-structured dialogues, trainings and campaigns.
- Direct interaction with service providers through the use of technology is one approach to enhance customer leverage.

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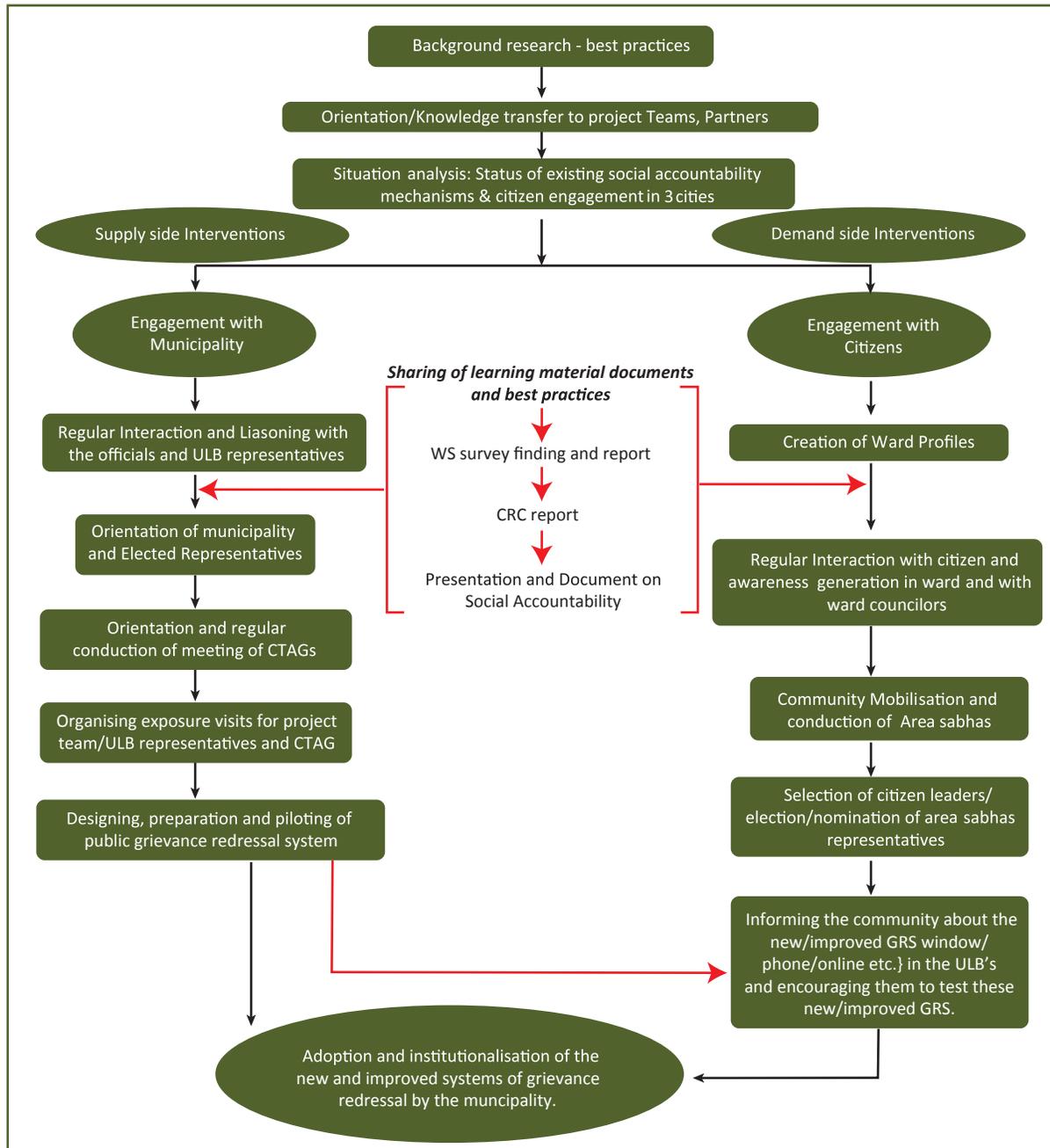
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Annexes

Annex 1: Methodology Flowchart - SUISAM Project



Annex 2: Best Practices

Example 1:

Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS), India

The Government of India has enacted suitable laws to institutionalise grievance redress in public services. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) is the chief coordinating agency for redress of public grievances arising from the work of Ministries/Departments and other organisations of the government. The Department has issued important guidelines to all Ministries/Departments of the Central Government for handling grievance redress and to strengthen the grievance redress machinery in order to make the administration more responsive to the needs of the people.

The CPGRAMS is an online web-enabled system developed by National Informatics Centre (NIC) in association with the DARPG with an objective of speedy redress and effective monitoring of grievances by Ministries/Departments/Organisations of Government of India. This system besides providing a faster access offers the following facilities to citizens. CPGRAMS aims at capturing the real time work flow and interaction among all the participant users. The central idea of the application architecture is to introduce a standard and uniform approach to various functions in user departments, besides enabling them to carry out the business as per their local business needs. Therefore the highlights of this system are:

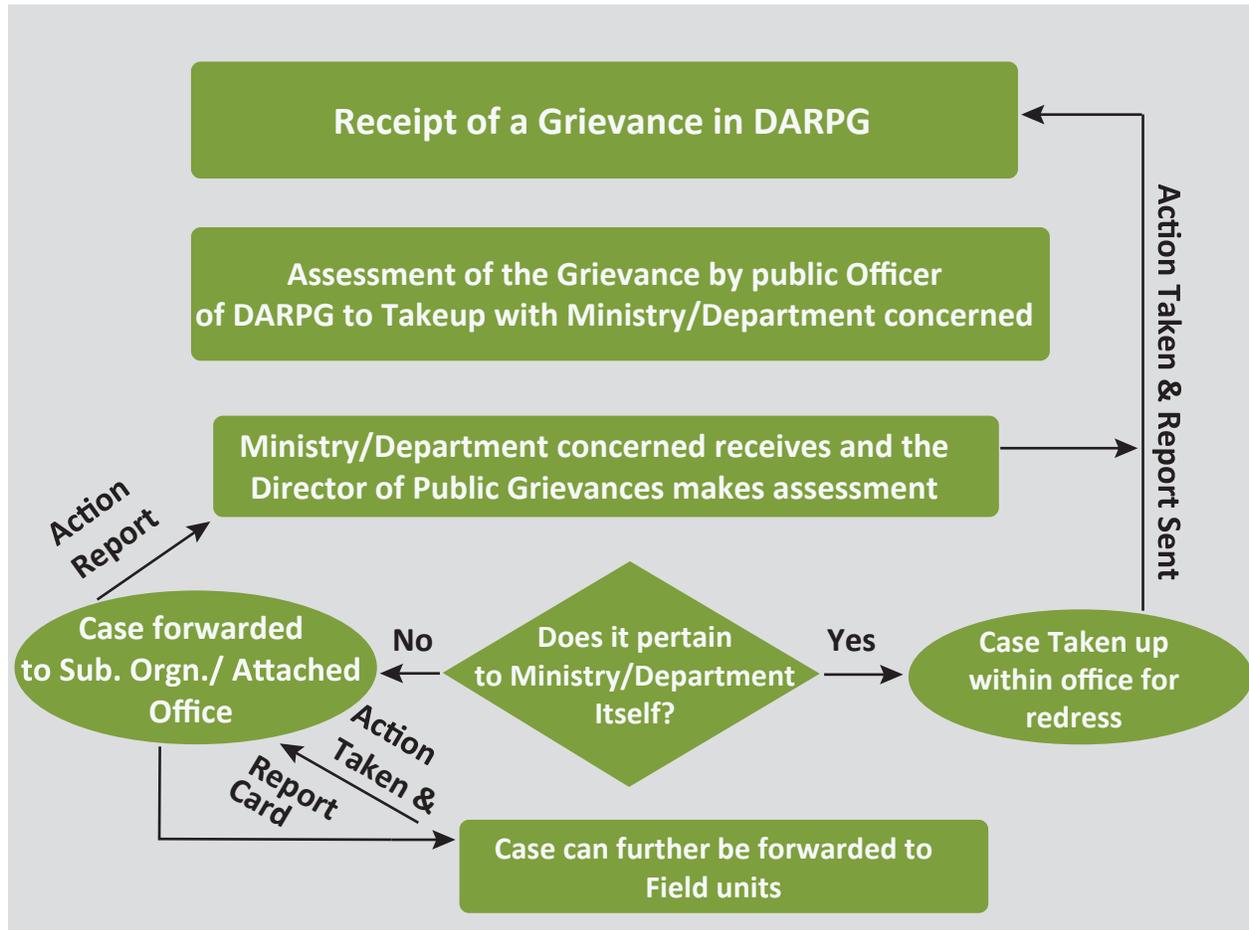
- Online web-enabled system
- Speedy redress
- Effective monitoring of grievances by Ministries/Departments/Organisations

Cycle of grievance redress operation

1. Lodging of the grievance by a citizen
2. Acknowledgement of acceptance of grievance by organisation.
3. Assessment of grievance regarding follow up action.
4. Forwarding and transfer
5. Reminders and clarification
6. Disposal of the case.

Consequent upon the online lodging of grievance by the citizen, the same electronically reaches the concerned Public Grievance (PG) officer of respective Ministries/Departments/Organisations of the Central and State Governments, who makes an assessment of the case and takes up with the concerned Subordinate organisations for an early settlement. The grievance gets redressed by the concerned organisation and the same is intimated to the complainant online.

Figure: Grievance Redress Flowchart under CPGRAMS



Example 2 :

PGRS system, Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai

The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) is the primary agency responsible for urban governance in Greater Mumbai. MCGM is one of the largest local governments in the Asian continent, with annual budgetary outlay of about Indian Rupees 40 billion, and a 100,000 strong workforce. Key services include education, medical care and education, water supply, public transport and electricity.

Central Complaint Registration System

- Logical corollary of the Citizens’ Charter
- Helpline (1916) with multiple hunting lines
- Multiple-service specific complaint centres in a single control room
- Software application to register complaints
- Complaint registration for monitoring
- Complaints sorted at control room

- Information transfer to wards on e-mail
- Redressal report furnished by ward
- Municipal Commissioner monitors performance

Multi-modal complaint service

Citizens can lodge complaints related to solid waste management, drainage, storm water drain, roads and traffic, factories, license issues, water supply, pest control, buildings, encroachment, etc. by either of the methods enlisted below,

- Online complaint registration form by visiting the Citizen Portal.
- Citizen Facilitation Centre (CFC) of the 24 wards of MCGM.
- By calling the 24 hours call attendance with 10 phone lines on 1916
- E-mail complaints to ccrs_ho@vsnl.net
- Hyperlink from MCGM website at www.mcgm.gov.in
- Fax complaints to 2269 4719
- Courier paper based complaints to CCRS, Municipal Head Office
- Verbal complaints registered at CCRS counter
- Complaints also received at Ward Office by Complaint Officer

How It Operates

- Complaint received at ward office /CCRS gets entered into software
- Application provides Complaint Tracking Number for reference
- Complaint gets dispatched to relevant redressing authority via email
- Redressing authority enters redressal details into the application
- Non-redressal of complaint within timeframe results in automatic escalation of complaint to next higher authority
- Citizen can be provided complaint status at any time
- System generates rich MIS for monitoring efficiency
- MIS routinely checked by Municipal Commissioner and is open to general public as well

The Progress made so far

- Computerised CCRS started function from December 2000
- Over 100,000 complaints received till date
- Redressal rate is about 76.52 percent, despite large number of cases where action cannot be taken as matters pending in courts
- Independent surveys show increased citizen satisfaction

Key Benefits

- Citizens do not have to possess knowledge of where and when to complain for which particular service. One single number, active round the clock, for complaints regarding any municipal service
- Citizens have wider choice of mode of complaint: Uneducated people find it difficult to use complaint forms and procedures.

- Citizens can track the status of their complaint with the allotted Complaint Tracking Number
- Complaints are automatically escalated in case not solved within timeframe
- Superior transparency and active monitoring by Municipal Commissioner and general public ensures quality of service
- Computerisation has taken away the mundane part of the job and enhanced efficiency

Figure: Complaint Registration Form

Lodge a complaint

Note: Fields marked with * are Mandatory

Define Nature Of Your Complaint

Select Complaint type*

Select Complaint subtype

Description in brief * (maximum upto 150 characters)

Specify Location Of Your Complaint

House No.	<input type="text"/>	House Name	<input type="text"/>
Street 1*	<input type="text"/>	Street 2	<input type="text"/>
Area 1*	<input type="text"/>	Area 2	<input type="text"/>
City	MUMBAI	Pincode*	<input type="text"/>

Landmark (maximum upto 60 characters)

Select ward*

Name of the Ward Councillor/ No.

Name of Complainant

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
First Name	Middle Name	Last Name

Address of Complaint

House No	<input type="text"/>	House Name	<input type="text"/>
Street 1	<input type="text"/>	Street 2	<input type="text"/>
Area 1	<input type="text"/>	Area 2	<input type="text"/>
City	MUMBAI	Pin Code	<input type="text"/>
Country	India	State	Maharashtra

Vision

- Integrate other MCGM complaint agencies
 - Ward Complaint Officers
 - Public Grievance meeting of Corporation
 - Lokshahi Din
 - Zonal DMCs
 - Head of Department & other Head office Principals
 - Assistant Municipal Commissioner

- Extension to beat officers
- Improve complaint redressal at beat level through strengthening of beat system

Example 3

Public Complaint Bureau (PCB), Malaysia

The establishment of Public Complaints Bureau (PCB) was announced by the late Y.A.B. Tun Haji Abdul Razak bin Hussein, Malaysia's second Prime Minister on 23rd July 1971. Initially, PCB was placed under the General Planning Division, Prime Minister's Department and started its operation on 2nd August 1971. Among the objective of PCB's establishment is to ensure effective and fair administration practiced by the government agencies. Apart from that, PCB is also established to strengthen the relations between Government and public and at the same time create an avenue to public to air their difficulties when dealing with the Government agencies.

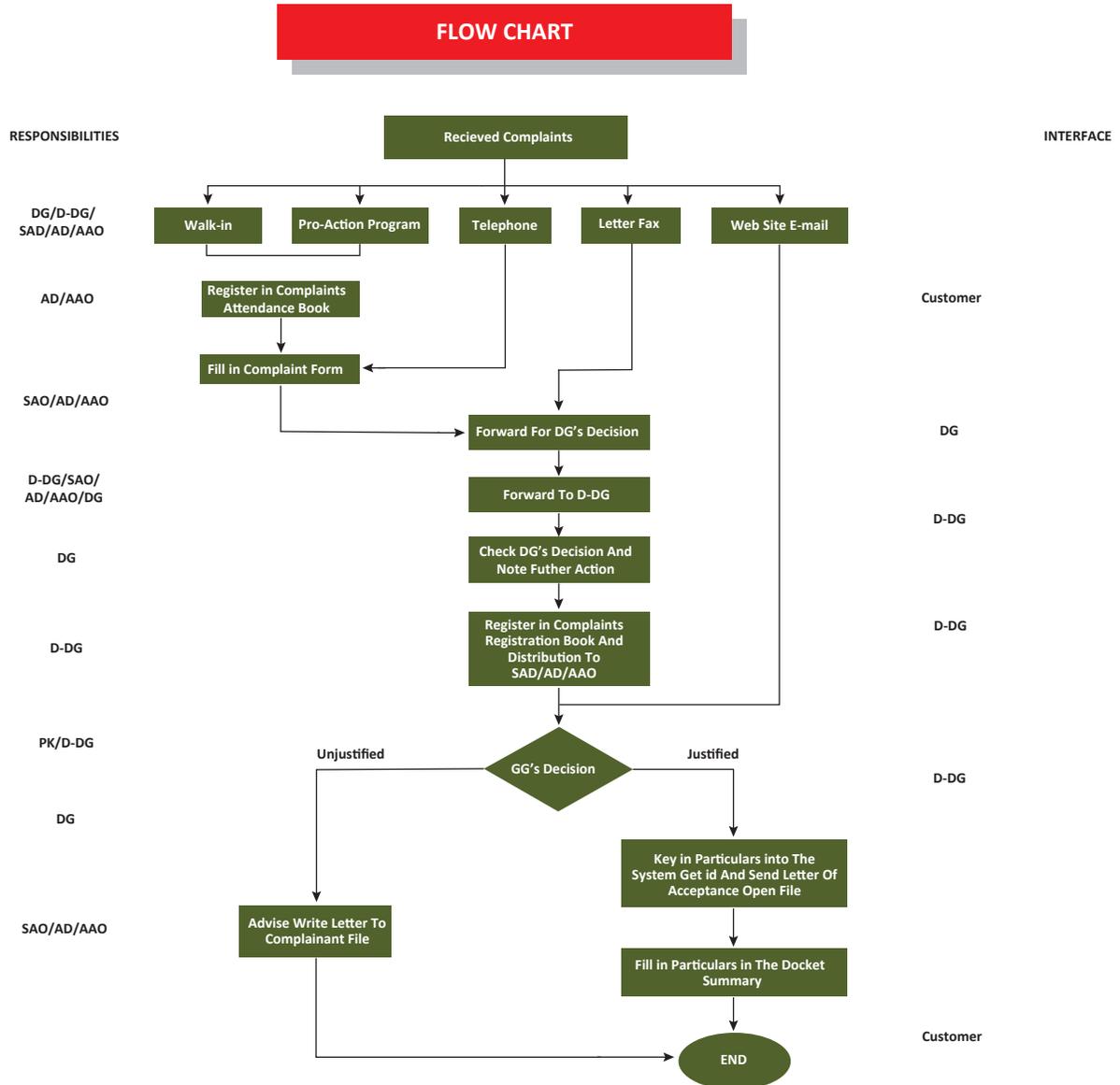
PCB Objectives

- To resolve complaints efficiently, fairly, and effectively as promised in the PCB Client's Charter;
- To improve the rate of resolving complaints received from the public;
- To provide and improve facilities for the public to lodge complaints;
- To reduce repetitive complaints against the public services;
- To introduce changes and innovation based on public complaints received;
- To provide advisory services to agencies in order to improve the effectiveness of public complaints management system;
- To detect issues that can lead to complaints made by the public; and
- To obtain public opinion to ensure the success of the Governments' development programmes.

Methods to Lodge Complaint

- Send a letter without stamp to Public Complaints Bureau, P.O. Box 9000 Kuala Lumpur.
- Walk in to the Headquarters Office / State Offices or by telephoning.
- Lodge complaints through PCB's website at www.bpa.jpm.my and e- mail complaints to aduan@bpa.jpm.my.
- Complaints lodged through PCB's programmes
- Mobile Complaints Counter (MCC)
- Integrated Mobile Complaints Counter (IMCC), etc.

Figure: Grievance Redress Process, PCB, Malaysia



Types of Complaints made By Public

Below are examples of complaints that can be lodged to the Public Complaints Bureau for further action:

1. Delays/No Action
2. Unfair Action
3. Lack of Public Amenities
4. Inadequacies of Policy Implementation And Law
5. Abuses of Power
6. Misconduct of Civil Servants

- 
7. Failure to Adhere to Set Procedures
 8. Unsatisfactory Quality of Service Provided
 9. Failure to Enforce Regulations/Laws
 10. Miscellaneous Complaint.

Complaint Handling Process

It is advisable for complainants to lodge their complaints to the department that they have problem with before contacting the PCB for assistance.